DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 929 RC 019 190

AUTHOR Gregory, Leonard, Comp.
TITLE National Congress on Rural Education Proceedings (1st, Traverse City, Michigan, October 11, 1992).
INSTITUTION North Central Regional Educational Lab., Oak Brook, IL.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Problems; Government School Relationship; Policy Formation; Public Relations; *Rural Education; Rural Schools

ABSTRACT

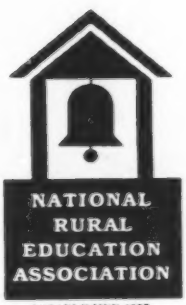
The first National Congress on Rural Education, organized and conducted in conjunction with the 84th annual convention of the National Rural Education Association, convened an assembly of 458 advocates of rural education which came together to analyze common problems that tend to disaffect education in rural America and to plan corrective action. This report summarizes the events of the Congress. Following a general assembly, participants separated into 24 forum groups led by trained facilitators and identified disabling and chronic barriers to the improvement of rural education. A general town hall assembly then heard each group's findings and voted to determine the most important obstacles. Three major ones were identified; they concerned: (1) awareness and image; (2) equity and resources; and (3) separatism and provincialism. Participants returned to their groups and discussed solutions and strategies for addressing these three main barriers to improvement. A total of 16 strategies were identified that focused on public relations, lobbying federal and state goverments, policy formation, networking, use of technology, and lifelong learning. An appendix lists Congress leaders, forum facilitators, and members of the 1992 and 1993 executive committees of the National Rural Education Association. (SV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED357929

Proceedings

National Congress on Rural Education Traverse City, Michigan October 11, 1992



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Kroeger

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Published by the
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Jeri Nowakowski, Executive Director
Joseph J. D'Amico, Director of Rural Education

RC 019190

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Proceedings

National Congress on Rural Education Traverse City, Michigan October 11, 1992

Organized and conducted in conjunction
with the 84th annual convention of the
National Rural Education Association
230 Education Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-0001

Compiled by
Dr. Leonard Gregory
Kearney State University
Kearney, Nebraska

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, Illinois 60521
(708) 571-4700

Copyright 1993

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Executive Summary 2

Format and Process 3

General Barriers 5

Strategies and Solutions 7

Conclusion 9

Appendix 10

Introduction

Every morning, hundreds of thousands of American children head off to rural schools where it is hoped they will gain the skills and knowledge to shape their futures—and thus the future of America and the world. Too often these schools are poorly housed, ill-equipped, and badly staffed. For many, perhaps most, these conditions have become chronic—ones which defy the efforts of local educators and citizens. Organized programs are needed to analyze the conditions, to lay plans, and to implement effective reforms. It is toward these ends that the National Congress on Rural Education was conceived and initiated.

The goal of the Congress was to convene an assembly of concerned advocates of rural education from across the nation to address the common problems that tend to disaffect education in rural America, and to initiate action toward correction. This document is a report of the actual event.

Executive Summary

Background

In January 1992 rural education leaders in each state were asked to recommend persons to receive invitations to attend the first National Rural Education Association (NREA) Congress. From these nominations invitations were extended to selected individuals to participate in the National Congress on Rural Education in Traverse City, Michigan, on October 11, 1992. The Congress was attended by 458 education and civic leaders representing almost all of the United States and its territories.

History of the Concept

The concept of the Congress had its beginning in 1989 in Missouri where rural educators believed more grassroots definitions and solutions were needed than existing processes could provide. Forums were held to focus attention on the real problems facing rural education and, at the same time, develop solutions to those problems. Rural educators in Arizona adopted the Congress after observing Missouri's Congress in operation. As did Missouri, Arizona also used it with success. With the election of Dr. Bill Peter of Missouri as the president of the National Rural Education Association, the rural education Congress concept was introduced to the Executive Committee, which adopted it as a part of the annual convention.

Format and Process

Congress Format

The Congress was presided over by NREA President William Peter who, after presenting the charge, introduced the Congress Moderator, Dr. Robert Benson of St. Louis, who conducted the rest of the meetings and kept the 458-member assembly moving toward consensus through the ensuing five and one-half hours.

Following the initial general assembly, the Congress broke into small group forums to discuss the initial question, then assembled in a town hall meeting to work toward consensus, then met again in forums to discuss a second question based upon that consensus, and finally assembled again in the town hall to work toward final consensus on a solution.

Initial Question

The first of two questions to be addressed by the Congress forum groups was *"What are the most disabling and chronic barriers to the improvement of rural education in America?"*

First Forum Groups

Each of the twenty-four forum groups was headed by a facilitator and an assistant whose responsibility was to keep the discussion on track and to involve all of the eighteen to twenty members in the structured decisionmaking process. A recorder from each group was appointed to record the proceedings which were reported during the town hall assembly. The facilitators had received special training on how to conduct the group sessions.

The forum groups met for approximately one hour. During that time they generated a list of environmental barriers that were impeding the essential advancement of education in rural America. This list was prioritized and major problems were identified.

First Town Hall Meeting

Following the first group forum meeting, the entire Congress reconvened in a town hall meeting. During this meeting, each group reported the three to five factors it had identified as barriers to the improvement of rural education. These barriers were compiled and participants were asked to vote on the three barriers they considered most important. The congress facilitator, Dr. Benson, helped build a consensus regarding the next step.

Second Question

The second question to be addressed by the forum groups was *"What are the solutions and strategies for addressing the barriers to the improvement of rural education?"*

Second Forum Groups

Based on the consensus of the first town hall meeting, the forums reconvened in a second meeting to address this question.

Second Town Hall Meeting

The Congress reconvened in a second town hall meeting. During this meeting each group reported on proposed solutions and strategies it had identified. This information was compiled. The Congress facilitator helped build a consensus.

General Barriers

Within each forum group a wide variety of barriers were identified. The most frequently identified barriers were as follows:

- There is an image/attitude problem that rural/small is okay.
- Too many policymakers equate efficiency with large populations or large areas. There needs to be a paradigm change.
- The rural voice is inadequate.
- There is a lack of rural consciousness among policymakers and a lack of political influence in the legislatures and state departments of education.
- Legislatures enact laws that do not provide for the special circumstances of rural education, especially rural funding.
- Legislatures and Congress mandate rural education programs without providing the resources to implement them.
- Legislatures are politically dominated by urban policymakers.
- The population and economic bases in rural America have eroded, making it difficult to initiate new education programs.
- There is a loss of local control in rural districts.
- There is a lack of realistic standards for accountability.
- There is a lack of adequate curriculum development programs in rural schools.
- There is a lack of adequate staff development programs in rural schools.
- There is an inability to attract and retain needed certificated personnel in rural schools.
- Administrators are overloaded in rural schools. They are expected to be personnel directors, budget directors, maintenance supervisors, and transportation supervisors as well as instructional leaders.
- There is a change in the family structure that is affected by the economic and social structure in rural areas.
- There are needy children coming to rural schools who are not ready to learn.

- Due to geographic constraints, there is a lack of integration of social services for needy families in rural areas.
- Due to provincialism, there is an unwillingness on the part of rural communities and rural boards of education to utilize available resources to expand instruction.
- There is a decline of values.
- There is a talent drain in rural communities due to economic conditions.
- Rural education prepares students to leave the community.
- Educational facilities are old and out of date.
- Higher education is not responsive to the needs of rural districts.
- There is a technology need, but no plans to access technology for rural schools.

Participants were asked to select the most important obstacles to the improvement of rural education which could be addressed. Three barriers were selected. They are:

- Awareness and Image
- Equity and Resources
- Separatism and Provincialism

Strategies and Solutions

Awareness and Image

During their second forum group meeting, participants identified the following strategies and solutions for addressing the barriers to the improvement of rural education.

A. Leaders in rural education need to strengthen awareness that rural schools are "good schools" and to enhance the rural education image.

B. The myth that something is lacking or inadequate in rural education must be dispelled.

C. Rural education needs a stronger lobbying voice in national and state governments. legislators must realize that rural schools will continue to exist. All rural students deserve educational opportunities equal to those made available to students in urban and suburban districts.

D. Rural educators must voice the successes in rural American education.

E. National and state governments must be made to realize that rural schools have always contributed innovative and effective teaching methodologies, many of which have been adapted by larger schools, such as peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, small class size, and whole grade sharing.

F. Rural school educators need to develop a shared vision that establishes a public relations program which uses our current accomplishments. Within this program a segment should include the development of a systemic change model that will allow rural education to progress into the 21st century.

G. Rural school educators need to develop a marketing program for its communities and schools that is:

- Accurate and positive
- Based upon data information
- Targeted to the public, policymakers and ourselves, and able to communicate the vision of rural America.

Equity and Resources

A. Legislators must recognize the need for rural education and provide for rural variables in school funding formulas which makes a higher cost per pupil, i.e., density, transportation, class size, distance, technology, etc.

B. Financial resources must be provided to attract and retain qualified certificated staff.

C. National and state government leaders must provide resources to implement mandated programs.

D. Legislators must provide resources for long distance learning.

Separatism and Provincialism

A. Boards of education must set policy that will educate students for the future instead of educating for the present with methods from the past.

B. Public school officials must take responsibility for interagency collaboration, providing the human services to enable students to attend school ready to learn.

C. Officials of the National Rural Education Association must create a networking system among the rural education organizations in America.

D. The latest in technology must be implemented to create a wider variety of educational opportunities for students, staff, and members of the community.

E. School officials must use the local school to create opportunities for the community to take advantage of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

The National Rural Education Congress was attended by 458 delegates. Delegates were invited from each state. Through the use of the group techniques of brainstorming and town hall meetings, the members of the Congress reached a consensus on *three disabling and chronic barriers to the improvement of rural education in America.* These three barriers were *Awareness and Image, Equity and Resources,* and *Separatism and Provincialism.*

The evaluation from the participants was positive. There was a general feeling that the Congress was a worthwhile project. Several participants stated that they believed they were involved in something important, something that would have an impact on helping rural education in America.

In order to continue the momentum for change, an annual status report should be made on how well each barrier has been addressed. Such a status report, a follow-up to the 1992 Congress, will be made during the October 1993 NREA Convention in Burlington, Vermont, and communicated to the policymakers on the national and state levels of government.

Appendix

Appendix

Credits

The following people provided leadership for the National Rural Education Congress:

Congress Chair ..... Bill Peter, Missouri
Congress Coordinator ..... Kenneth Brookens, Missouri
Congress Moderator ..... Robert Benson, Missouri
Proceedings Editor ..... Leonard Gregory, Nebraska
Proceedings Published by
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Oak Brook, IL
..... Jeri Nowakowski, Executive Director
..... Joseph J. D'Amico, Director of Rural Education

Forum Facilitators

Gordon Bachus, Missouri
Derrall Beasley, Missouri
David Cooper, Missouri
William Cornett, Missouri
Fred Czarnowsky, Arizona
Larry Dorrell, Missouri
Phil Dorth, Missouri
Robert Fallows, Arizona
Gerald Fillinger, Missouri
Leland Foster, Missouri
Mary Lou Gammon, Arizona
Gene Garrison, Missouri
Margaret Hatcher, Arizona
Barbara Havlicek, Kansas
Jac Heiss, Arizona
Jerry Horn, Texas
Thomas Howard, Missouri
Keigh Hubble, Minnesota
Huber Joe, Missouri
Eldon Kriesel, Missouri
Bill Kurtz, Texas
Pat Laubach, North Dakota
Jimmie Lawrence, Missouri
Sue Myers, Arizona
Robert Newhouse, Kansas
Ralph Powell, Missouri
Mike Rustman, Missouri
Dean Schnakenberg, Missouri
Randy Sherrif, Missouri
Paul Street, Arizona
David Sylva, Arizona

1992 NREA Executive Committee

President	William G. Peter Missouri Center for Small Schools Central Missouri State University Warrensburg, MO 64093-5091 816/543-4261 Fax: 816/543-8449
President-Elect	Gerald D. Hanson 9561 Highbanks Road Cheboygan, MI 49721 616/627-7563 Fax: 616/627-7563
Immediate Past President	Dave Trujillo Superintendent Peyton School District Peyton, CO 80841 719/749-2330 Fax: 719/749-2368
Educational Service Agency	Rene L. "Jay" Bouchard District Superintendent Steuben-Allegany BOCES 6666 Babcock Hollow Road Bath, NY 14810-9796 607/776-7631 Fax: 607/776-7226
Higher Education	Kathleen Flanagan Ashland University 215 Bixler Hall Ashland, OH 44805 419/289-5356 Fax: 419/289-5097
Member-At-Large	Bennie McKay PO Box 599 Rayville, LA 71269 318/728-5964 Fax: 318/728-6366
Rural School Administrator	Reid Straabe Box 700 New Town Public School New Town, ND 58763-0700 701/627-3658 Fax: 701/627-3689

Rural School District Board	Jack Wysong Rural Route #1, PO Box 132 Steen, MN 56173 507/855-2330
Rural School Teacher	David Leo-Nyquist PO Box 59 Weott, CA 95571 707/946-2487
State Education Agency	Travis A. Cliett Mississippi State Council on Vocational Education 510 George Street Jackson, MS 39202-3027 601/359-3413 Fax: 601/359-3400
U.S. Department of Education Liaison	Joyce Stern OERI 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20208 202/219-6095 Fax: 202/219-2106
Executive Director	Joseph T. Newlin NREA Headquarters 230 Education Building Colorado State University Fort Collins, CO 80523-0001 303/491-7022 Fax: 303/491-1317

1993 NREA Executive Committee

President	Gerald D. Hanson 9561 Highbanks Road Cheboygan, MI 49721 616/627-7563 Fax: 616/627-7563
President-Elect	Rene L. "Jay" Bouchard District Superintendent Steuben-Allegany BOCES 6666 Babcock Hollow Road Bath, NY 14810-9796 607/776-7631 Fax: 607/776-7226
Immediate Past President	William G. Peter Missouri Center for Small Schools Central Missouri State University Warrensburg, MO 64093-5091 816/543-4261 Fax: 816/543-8449
Educational Service Agency	Paul N. Street 255 E. Gurley Prescott, AZ 86301 602/771-3326 Fax: 602/771-3329
Higher Education	Kathleen Flanagan Ashland University 215 Bixler Hall Ashland, OH 44805 419/289-5356 Fax: 419/289-5097
Member-At-Large	Bennie McKay PO Box 599 Rayville, LA 71269 318/728-5964 Fax: 318/728-6366
Rural School Administrator	Mary Lou Gammon Bonita Elementary School Distrtict #16 Sunset Route Box 1 Willcox, AZ 85643 602/828-3363 Fax: 602/828-3422

Rural School District Board	John L. Sullivan PO Box 331 Logan, KS 67646 913/689-7441
Rural School Teacher	David Leo-Nyquist PO Box 59 Weott, CA 95571 707/946-2487
State Education Agency	Travis A. Cliett Mississippi State Council on Vocational Education 510 George Street Jackson, MS 39202-3027 601/359-3413 Fax: 601/359-3400
U.S. Department of Education Liaison	Joyce Stern OERI 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20208 202/219-6095 Fax: 202/219-2106
Executive Director	Joseph T. Newlin NREA Headquarters 230 Education Building Colorado State University Fort Collins, CO 80523-0001 303/491-7022 Fax: 303/491-1317

NATIONAL RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
230 Education Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-0001
990052

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Fort Collins, CO 80523-0001
PERMIT NUMBER 19

Howley, Craig, ERIC/CRESS
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
P. O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325

BEST COPY AVAILABLE